

THE SECRET OF PATIENCE Proverbs 19:11

INTRODUCTION:

Some wag has written,
*"Patience is a virtue,
Possess it if you can,
Seldom found in woman,
Never found in man."*

I don't know who wrote that little bit of doggerel but I do know who wrote this wise observation. In Proverbs 19:11, Solomon wrote:

*"A man's wisdom gives him patience;
it is to his glory to overlook an offense."*

I couldn't go so far as to say that patience is "seldom found in woman" and "never found in man" but I will admit that patience is a virtue that is in short supply. And it may be no place more rare than in the home.

Our culture has not created a climate that encourages patience. Has it struck you strange that the company that advertises, "*You deserve a break today*" is a fast food restaurant? It is as if they are saying, "*You deserve a break today but make it a quick one. Come on in! Let's see how fast you can take a break today and then get back out and get back to work.*"

And while our current culture does not encourage patience, impatience is not a new phenomenon. As the story is told, in the latter 1800's, Alfred Lord Tennyson invited a Russian nobleman to his estate. Early one morning the Russian nobleman took off with dogs and guns and servants to go hunting.

At mid-day he returned and Lord Tennyson asked him how he did. He answered, "*Not very well. I shot two peasants.*" Lord Tennyson thought for a moment and then said, "*No, we pronounce it with a 'ph' here. It is 'pheasants.'* You shot two pheasants."

"No," the nobleman replied, "*I shot two peasants. They were in my way, so I shot them.*"

A story like that may make us chuckle but the stories from our time do not.

When I was in college, I worked one summer at U.S. Steel in Gary, IN. During that summer, there was an incident on the parking lot. A driver saw that another person was about to pull out of a parking space near the front of the lot so he pulled over in the aisle and waited for the first driver

to back out of the parking space. When the first driver had backed out, the one who had waited began to pull forward and just then, another driver zipped into the parking space in front of him. The driver who had waited got out of his car, dragged the other man from his vehicle and beat him to death with a tire iron. Over a parking space! And there is nothing about that lack of patience that would make us chuckle.

Patience is in short supply and a lack of patience is dangerous – to the impatient person and to those around him.

I. THE DEFINITION OF PATIENCE

When Solomon wrote the book of Proverbs, he would have done so in the Hebrew tongue for that was his native language. In Hebrew, the word that means “patience” is a compound word combining the term for lengthen, elongate or draw out and the term for anger or wrath. Literally, as Solomon employed the word, patience means to draw out or delay getting angry.

You see, the virtue of patience does not mean that nothing perturbs you. It means that you choose to control your emotions rather than allowing your emotions to control you. You will delay getting angry, you will put off any outburst until you have had a chance to process the frustration and decide how best to deal with it.

In fact, in the Greek language, the language in which the New Testament was written, the word for patience is also a compound word combining the term “to make” and the word for “breath”. Literally, in Greek, to be patient is to make breath. Didn’t you parents tell you that when you got angry, you should take several deep breaths? Whether they knew it or not, they were speaking Greek to you.

I must confess, sometimes the language of patience is Greek to me. But think about it for a moment. Remember that Solomon said that a man’s wisdom gives him patience. So what do you suppose gives him impatience? Perhaps his foolishness and his thoughtlessness.

Will Rogers said, “Whenever you fly into a rage, you seldom make a safe landing.” I can testify to that! My rage has landed me in some places I never intended to be. What about you? Has your impatience ever left you in a predicament?

Most of us would agree that we need more patience. But most of us aren’t very good at knowing how to develop more patience.

II. THE DEVELOPMENT OF PATIENCE

I know for sure that simply reviewing the *definition of patience* doesn't guarantee you'll have any. But there are some things we can do to develop this precious virtue. I want to give you some practical steps to take to become more patient.

First of all, recognize that patience is not instinct: it must be developed. It is natural for us to be impatient. After all, look at little kids. Young children act according to impulse and instinct. Impulsively and instinctively, we are selfish, intolerant and impatient. Like two-year olds in the checkout lane at a grocery store, we want what we want and we want it now. To be told “no” makes us angry. To be told “later” is almost worse. By temperament, we are wired to be rash.

Once we come to understand that, we can begin to grasp the fact that we will not become patient without effort. As surely as weeds grow naturally and crops require cultivation, so intolerance comes automatically but patience requires nurturing.

Secondly, we must realize that patience is an aspect of the fruit of the Spirit. In Galatians 5:22-23, Paul wrote

...The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Patience is the fourth virtue that Paul listed as an aspect of the fruit of the Spirit. Now if you wanted to harvest apples, you would do everything you could to grow an apple tree. If you wanted to harvest peaches, you would do everything you could to raise a peach tree. You get the picture. This isn't too complicated.

If you want to harvest the fruit of the Spirit, you must concentrate on creating the right kind of an environment so the Holy Spirit can grow. When a person becomes a Christian, he receives the gift of the Holy Spirit. But that is like a planted seed. Before the seed can bear fruit, it must take root, grow and mature. Before the Holy Spirit can begin to bear fruit in you, you must create the kind of environment in which he can grow and mature in you. And then, he will bring forth fruit that is characterized by love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

You cannot muster up patience on your own. It is a facet of the fruit of the Spirit.

Third, remember that Proverbs 19:11 says a man's wisdom gives him patience. If you want more patience, develop more wisdom. And that

does not mean simply to develop more knowledge. It is possible to know a lot and still be foolish.

When Jesus told the parable about the wise and foolish builders, he said the fool is the person who hears his words but does not obey them. The wise person is the one who hears and implements what he hears. If you would become more patient, develop wisdom and wisdom develops by hearing and putting into practice the word of the Lord.

We've been looking at Proverbs 19:11. In the same book of the Bible, in verse seven of the first chapter of Proverbs, Solomon wrote: "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.*" To develop more patience, develop more wisdom and to develop more wisdom, gain greater respect for the Lord.

Obviously, you will not put into practice what the Lord says if you do not respect what He says. Since the wise person is the one who lives out the teachings of the Lord, clearly, the beginning of wisdom is the respect, value and reverence of the Lord.

So, just to review, to develop patience

1. Recognize that patience must be cultivated.
2. Realize that patience is an aspect of the fruit of the Spirit.
3. Remember that patience is produced by wisdom

III. THE DEMONSTRATION OF PATIENCE

I want you to know that when a person is patient, it shows. A person's patience will eventually reveal itself and typically in a time of great stress.

When a person is patient, it shows in his relationships more than it shows anywhere else.

I read this week about a naïve Christian couple. When they married, both believed that because they loved each other and they loved the Lord, they were going to live in tranquility and never have an argument in their marriage. However, they discovered that their marriage really wasn't like that. The longer they were married, the more they disagreed and the more they churned. The young bride was really disturbed. She knew she wasn't supposed to get a divorce but she was getting impatient working and waiting for the problems to resolve in their home. Finally, one day she said to her husband, "Honey, we can't get a divorce. We are Christians and we promised God we would be married until death us do part. But I've come up with an idea. Let's pray to the Lord that He will take one of us home...then I'll go live with my mother."

Praying for your spouse to die is not a sign of patience. But rolling up your sleeves and working for a Godly marriage, even though you think it would be easier to bail-out, that is a sign of patience.

Remember that when a person is patient, he is slow to become angry. He takes deep breaths and carefully, rationally and thoughtfully considers what would be the best thing to do. When someone acts like that, it shows. It is apparent. It is evident in his choices and in his behaviors.

Not only is it true that patience shows, it is also true that patience shows wisdom. That was part of Solomon's point in Proverbs 19:11.

*"A man's wisdom gives him patience;
it is to his glory to overlook an offense."*

Patience is surface evidence of deep down wisdom.

Not only does patience show and not only does patience show wisdom, patience also shows glory. The Hebrew word for "glory" is also translated as finery, ornament or adornment. Patience is like a jewel, a gem, a precious ornament and it enhances your beauty more than the most expensive accessories money can buy.

God rewards patience. The two to whom it is the most difficult to show patience are God and yourself.

It can be very difficult to be patient with God. Isaiah 40:31, in the King James Version of the Bible reads, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles..." But it can be difficult to wait upon the Lord. We know He can grant us what we desire so we have trouble waiting for Him to respond.

But if it is difficult to be patient with the Lord, it is perhaps even more difficult for some people to be patient with themselves. Some folk can be pretty tolerant and understanding of the failures of others but they won't cut themselves any slack. It is a virtue and a grace to learn to be patient with your own shortcomings.

CONCLUSION:

Did you know that jadeite is the most precious gemstone in the world? While an excellent diamond may sell for \$1000 per carat, typically, jadeite sells for over **\$3 million** per carat.

Jadeite is the most precious gemstone and painite is considered the rarest with only 18 examples known to exist.

But surely patience is both a rare and precious gem. Jadeite and Painite are beautiful but not particularly functional. They have no known use other than to be decorative. Patience, on the other hand, is not only a thing of beauty to behold, it is useful. In fact, even more than merely useful, patience is *essential* for lasting relationships and for a successful home. But you must value it to possess it.

I hope you will cherish patience, that you will work to develop it and that you will demonstrate patience as you live out your commitment to Christ. When you do, God will truly be glorified in your life.

INVITATION: #186 – “*Lord, Be Glorified*”